

PHYSICS NEWS FLASH

**Department Hosts Planetary Views**

**Updated April 2, 2004**

Paul Lewis of the UT Department of Physics and Astronomy and local volunteers will conduct telescope observations of five planets on several nights over the next two weeks, weather permitting. The observations will be held on the roof of the 11th Street Parking Garage, located on the corner of 11th Street and Cumberland Avenue next to the old World's Fair site. There is no parking fee in the garage for these events. You may enter the garage from either 11th Street or White Avenue.

Every few years, we are fortunate to get a temporary, spectacular view of a few planets as they seemingly gather together in the night sky. This time we will see Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter as they appear to line up from the western horizon to the eastern horizon on what is known as the ecliptic. Mercury is usually the most difficult of the terrestrial planets to view due to its proximity to the sun and the fact that it rarely gets very high in the sky. However, on March 29, both Mercury and Venus will be at their farthest point from the sun this year, making them easy targets for our telescopes. Jupiter and Saturn are breathtaking in appearance, but Mars is much farther away than it was last August and so its a great challenge to see any features at all.

We will certainly see planets at various times in the years ahead, but we will not see this parade of planets with the moon again for another 32 years, so don't pass up this opportunity.

The scheduled dates so far are Friday, April 2 and Saturday April 3, beginning at 8:00 p.m. Additionally, Monday, April 5 and Tuesday, April 6, beginning at 9:00 p.m. (Remember Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday morning at 2:00 a.m., so don't forget to move your clocks forward one hour). For additional information, see our Web site at <http://trdc.phys.utk.edu> and click on Public Viewing. You may also call 974-7815 or 974-3342.